RNA FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

RIVERVIEW Neighborhood Association

December/January-1988 *232 Ogden Avenue — Jersey City, N.J. 07307 — (201) 798-0493*

RNA IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY POLITICAL PARTY, ORGANIZATION OR ELECTED OFFICIAL.

MEETING MINUTES

At the November meeting of RNA, the principle guest speaker was Mr. Fred Rosen. Mr. Rosen is the architect for Investment Properties III. Our agenda was supposed to include Dr. Doris Molina, but unfortunately Dr. Molina was ill and unable to attend. The absence of one guest speaker allowed more time for Mr. Rosen to present the new plans for a building on the vacant lot adjacent to the Pohlmann Hall property.

In the past two years RNA has successfully opposed projects planned for this property, by these same developers. This present proposal, however, looks like a project we can support. In fact the members voted to abide by the recommendation of the Planning & Development Committee not to oppose the variance requests before the Board of Adjustment.

After Mr. Rosen finished the members listened to various committee reports, got the final deadline for contributions to the food drive, and made plans to go Christmas Caroling again this year. The date chosen was December 19th. When the business end of the meeting was concluded we adjourned to celebrate the birthdays, of members, that occur in the latter six months of the year.

Our December meeting's agenda will include a visit from our Ward D Councilman Tom Hart, further discussion on Pohlmann Hall's latest proposal and a festive toast to the upcoming Holidays. Be sure to join us Tuesday, December 8th, 7:30 PM at the Harbor View Health Care Center. Hope to see You!

Secretary
Maria E. Tuzzo

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Riverview Neighborhood Association would like to extend to ALL its members, neighbors, and friends A JOYOUS HOLIDAY, A MERRY CHRISTMAS, A HAPPY HANUKKAH, and A HEALTHY NEW YEAR!

The Editor
&
Staff

Under the Chair

This month's column will be devoted to an important issue: the future of the Heights reservoirs. The first piece is excerpted from a Jersey Journal article of Nov. 20th, written by Jim DeRogatis. The second is a letter to Mayor Cucci written by Councilman Tom Hart.
(UPDATE: J.J. reported on Nov. 25, that Mayor Cucci cancelled this disputed meeting after pressure from the area Councilmen and residents. TO BE CONTINUED....)

Jersey Journal:

Jersey City officials will hear a proposal next week from a developer who hopes to build a high-density residential project at the site of the Heights reservoirs.
Attorney Robert Kealy will present a plan to city development officials Tuesday for the two city reservoirs located between Central and Montrose Avenues and Troy Street and Reservoir Avenue. The meeting was arranged by Mayor Cucci, who called it a preliminary presentation and stressed that the city has not taken any steps toward designating a developer for the site.
According to Cucci, Kealy is proposing a residential complex that would be a mix of lowrise townhouses and highrise towers. The mayor said the project was designed by the Port Liberte architects, the Ehrenkrantz Group, and the style is similar to that development's.
The project is already being criticized by area Councilmen Thomas Hart and George Aviles and local residents, who charge that the scale is too large for the area and object that they were not consulted by the developer. The two coucilmen held a meeting with residents last night to discuss the development.
City officials have been discussing plans for the reservoirs for several years and have had numerous inquiries about the site, considered one of the most valuable after the city's waterfront.
Located on the border of the Journal Square and Heights wards, the reservoirs are in the midst of one of the city's most stable neighborhoods, an area characterized by one- and two-family homes.
Cucci said he met with Kealy several weeks ago and viewed a model of the project along with Rick Cohen, city director of HED and Jerome Killeen, director of the city Redevelopment Agency. Another meeting was scheduled for Tuesday to present plans for the project to other department heads, although Aviles and Hart were not originally invited.
Residents have expressed concern that development at the site conform with the existing neighborhood, and the City Council passed a resolution several months ago asking city departments to keep the residents informed of plans for the site. Hart attacked the mayor yesterday for conducting meetings with developers without residents' knowledge.
"We have not had any secret meetings," Cucci responded, adding that he hopes to schedule a meeting with area residents in the near future. "We will start getting the neighborhood's input before this plan goes before any legislative body."
Before the city can designate a developer for the reservoirs, a blight study and redevelopment plan must be drawn up and approved by the Planning Board and City Council, a process that could take more than a year, according to Cohen.
"The mayor's office is very attracted by this man's proposal but there is nothing definitive and there is a lengthy process before anything can be done," Cohen said. The blight study and the redevelopment plan will not be done by his office but by the Redevelopment Agency, he added.
Aviles and Hart both said they are opposed to a high-density development at the reservoirs.
"Probably the residents would support some development there, but most

are concerned about extracting as much open space from the developers as possible," Aviles said.
Kealy, whose brother, Joseph, is employed as Hudson County corporate counsel, has never developed a major project before. He represented Anna Cucci when she divorced her first husband about 10 years before she married the mayor.
The mayor said he did not believe Kealy's connection with his wife is a conflict, although the attorney's ties to county government might be. Kealy is counsel to the Hudson County Vocational-Technical School. He could not be reached for comment.

Councilman Hart's letter to Mayor Anthony Cucci:

This letter is written to request that your office cancel a meeting scheduled to be held on Tuesday, November 24th. The meeting is set to allow a presentation by Mr. Robert Kealy concerning the development of the property generally known as the "Reservoir Property". This meeting is in violation of all of the good faith agreements made between Jersey City and the residents of the area of Reservoir #3, agreements made over the past year.
There have been meetings held between these residents and their representatives, Councilman Aviles and I, and included members of the staff of HED, and other City agencies, and other Council members. On May 4, Mr. Gerald Sims of HED addressed the Heights Community Relations Council on the reservoir issue and assured the public that there was absolutely no activity ongoing and that, when any activity took place or was proposed to take place, the residents would be notified so as to allow their involvement with the project, according to all legal manners and means.
Further meetings were held, included among which was a meeting which resulted in the passage of a City Council Resolution supporting the proposal that HED inform the residency of any proposed activity at the reservoir site. A meeting as recent as October 14 was held in my office among the residents, Councilmen Aviles and Cunningham, and others to insure that the ongoing agreements were being upheld. HED has also agreed that they would perform a study of demographics, et cetera, to determine the best and highest use for that reservoir site and we have another meeting sceduled for November 30 at which we shall establish our own committee to prepare a report of findings of suitability and acceptability of projects for this extremely poignant development site.
As you can now see, the scheduling of a meeting as has been proposed is a clear violation of all the agreements now in place between the City and the residents of this area. Thus, this request that the meeting be cancelled until the appropriate time.
By the appropriate time, we mean such time as all developers are allowed to submit proposals, such time as all local residents have been included in the process -according to the current and ongoing agreements-, such time as the site is actually ready to accept proposals and now is not such a time, and such a time as all appropriate means have been taken to allow for other than very private meetings. No Council members were included in the invitations to Tuesday's meeting and not a single resident was included.
We cannot understand why someone did-not choose to honor the agreements made between the city and the residents However, we will assume that this was simply a human error of oversight and anticipate that our request for a cancellation of Tuesday's meeting will substantiate our belief that an innocent error has been made.
We look forword to the day when the reservoir site is appropriately and acceptably developed according to the needs and demands of the character and integrity of the Journal Square and Heights areas. And we look forward to a partnership in that development which includes the residential aspect of the community, the city, the developers, and when such activity takes place openly and according to the agreements toward which we have worked so diligently.

CONRAD'S CORNER

Why does Hartz want to knock down the Loews when they have plans for a twenty story building on vacant land west of their recently completed nine story office building still unoccupied?

Hartz Mountain Industries in their brochure mentions Jersey City's abundant road, tunnel, rail, bus and air access with a growing labor pool in and around the City. "Jersey City combines a cosmopolitan life style with the convenience of an urban center and a myriad of cultural, (Loews performing arts center) recreational and educational opportunities."

With an increased population of 50,000 along the waterfront, Jersey City will have to provide more than just condominiums and office buildings to improve the quality of life to make living in the city more desirable than in the suburbs.

The Loews as a performing arts center for Hudson County's 600,000 population could change that image with an interior more spectacular than any theatre in Lincoln Center or Newark's new cultural center Gov. Kean is hoping to build in the next 10 years. Most successful downtowns in the U.S. have restored their old theatres as cultural centers. Like the recently restored Fox Theatre in St. Louis for which tourists and natives pay $2.00 for tours just to gaze at the magnificent grandeur of the breath taking interior which puts on a show of its own without actors. If we had this kind of grandeur in 1928, we should at least have something as good or better in 1988.

If Jersey City can't afford to buy the theatre, the County can float a bond to pay off Hartz Mountain for a cultural center for Hudson County. The last Green Acres Bond issue of 45,000,000 just passed for restoring historic buildings can be used to make minimal repairs to reactivate the theatre. the same amount was used to rehabilitate the 4,665 seat Fox Theatre it's seating capacity with an enlarged orchestra pit and wider spacing of seats will be reduced to 2,400. The theatre can remain closed during the summer months to cut down on the cost of air conditioning when the performances can be transfered to Liberty Park.

Removal of the temporary sheet rock dividing partitions, a good dusting, cleaning carpets and drapes, rearranging some seats, an overhaul of the heating plant and electrical wiring system to have a trial performance in the theatre.

Later when the waterfront population increases to some 50,000, the $12,000,000 full estimated restoration cost of the study can be completed.

The Loews can be the catalyst in the redevelopment plan of Journal Square in attracting audiences from all over Hudson County with an easy Path ride from Hoboken, Pavonia and Exchange Places or access via bus along Kennedy Blvd. plus acres of parking spaces after five and weekends more than in Lincoln Center.

Funding for the theatre may come from a 1988 per-capita New Jersey figure calculated at $2.61 based on the 19.9 million appropriation figure, or $1,566,000 for Hudson County's 600,000 population instead of the $100,000 for the Park Theatre in Union City owned by the Archdiocese of Newark, $50,000 for the Hoboken Chamber Orchestra and $8,000 for Liberty Park.

L O E W S

The 58 year old Loew's Jersey Theater, an ornate eyepopper in Jersey City's Journal Square, has been dodging the wrecking ball for almost two years. Last week, the ball swung precariously close: The city's planning board voted to allow Hartz Mountain Industries Inc.--the theater's owners--to raze the closed landmark while preserving its facade and baroque lobby.

Theater preservationists want the entire 3,200 seat Loew's Jersey restored for use as a cultural arts center. "The merchants and the entertainment have left," said architect Walter Syrek, a member of the Jersey City Historic and Preservation Assoc. "We have many diverse ethnic (artists) looking to establish themselves as major participants in the city."

The preservationists are now looking to the City Council, which will review the planning board recommendation later this month. In the past, council members have supported efforts to save the theater. Preservationists argue that a restored Loew's would be a cost-effective alternative to the $200 million performing arts center proposed by the state for downtown Newark. They envision a versatile center featuring a mix of performances, conventions, high school graduations, and movie revivals.

Hartz has a very different idea of urban renewal. It plans to replace the theater with a mid-size office building one of a number the developer has planned for the Journal Square area. The jobs and rate income from an office building would be greater than from the theater, argues Morton Goldfein, Hartz vice president of law and public affairs. The developer, whose CEO Leonard Stern also owns the newspaper, finds the board's recommendations unacceptable because they would prevent Hartz from demolishing the entire building. Although Hartz originally agreet to preserve the lobby and facade, Goldfein said the delays have been so costly that Hartz must now demolish the entire structure. "I agree it's a neat theater," said Goldfein, "but we're not in the theater business." He said Hartz would continue its efforts to get a demolition permit.

The planning board made its decision after considering a study commissioned by the city and preservationists. The study estimated it would cost as much as $15 million to acquire and restore Loew's.

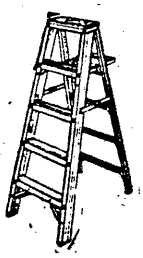
"I was really looking at the bottom line," says Planning Board chairman John Ranalli, who argues that although poor people would help fund the center through taxes, they wouldn't use it. Jersey City mayor, Anthony Cucci, has also said restoring the theater would direct funds away from more pressing needs of the poor. To which Anne Hart, a member of the Jersey City Historic and Preservation Association, responds, "Who's he to say the poor can't appreciate culture?"

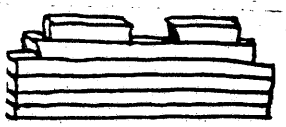
by Jan Bartelli

Reprinted from the Village Voice, November 24th issue.

The Jersey City Museum is sponsoring a Victorian Christmas party complete with authentic Christmas decorations and refreshments on Saturday, Dec. 12 from 1 to 4 P.M.

The event includes a pomander-making workshop, an antique dollhouse on view and special discounts in the museum gift shop. Admission is free. Workshop contribution is one dollar. The museum is located in the main Library, Jersey Avenue and Montgomery Street. For further information call 451-0802.





THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT

At the last RNA meeting, Fred Rosen, the architect for Investment Properties III, showed our members the new proposal for the condominium project to be built on the vacant lot south of Pohlmann Hall at 154-156 Ogden Avenue. The project calls for a 20 unit, 4-story condominium with 47 off-street parking spaces.

This scaled-down version of their previous proposal, is the exact compromise that RNA presented to these developers as an acceptable plan. The previous two plans were defeated by the neighborhood in front of the Board of Adjustment because of problems with density, height, parking and traffic.

In a joint effort, our P/D Committee and the developers along with Richard Bass of HED's Research and Design are negotiating an agreement to prevent any more building on the side and top of the adjoining Palisade cliffs. RNA is requesting that a restrictive covenant be placed in the land deed prohibiting any future construction on this parcel of land.

The developers are scheduled to appear appear before the Board of Adjustment for their variance requests for this project on December 14th. Our members voted to support this project as recommended by the P/D committee.

JEWISH COFFEE CAKE

Ingredients:

1 stick butter
4 egg yolks
1½ cups sour cream
3 cups flour
¼ tsp. salt
2 tsp. baking powder
1½ tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. vanilla
4 egg whites
2 cups sugar

Cream stick butter and sugar; add egg yolds and beat well. Then add sour cream and blend. Stir in flour, salt, baking powder, baking soda and vanilla. Fold in egg whites. Put ½ batter in pan, sprinkle with ½ topping. Add remaining batter and rest of topping.

Bake 1 hr. at 350 in a 10" greased tube pan.

Topping Receipe:

1 cup finely chopped nuts
½ cup brown sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
2 tbls. melted butter

IMPORTANT NOTICE

There will be no newsletter in January, 1988. However, there will be a RNA meeting held on Tuesday, Jan. 12, 1988 at 7:30 PM at the Harbor View Health Care Center.

Anyone wishing to submit an article for the next newsletter, please do so by January 22nd.

HERE WE COME A CAROLING

The RNA will go caroling again this year. If you were one of last year's participants, you know what a great time we had.

Anyone who wishes to join in the singing can meet us on Saturday, December 19, 6:30 P.M. at the gazebo in Riverview Park.

1987 FOOD DRIVE

The 1987 Food Drive was more successful than last year. We collected eleven bags of groceries, three more than in 1986.

The Salvation Army was glad to receive our contribution and arranged to make the pick-up November 23.

The food baskets are distributed to many needy families all over the city. Thanks to all our members who took this opportunity to share a part of what they have with those in need. Give yourselves a pat on the back - you deserve it.

TOYS FOR TOTS

Anyone who wishes to contribute a new or used toy (in good condition) to an underpriviledged child can do so by bringing that toy to the December 8th meeting of RNA or call 659-2245 after 5 P.M.

FALL HARVEST PARTY

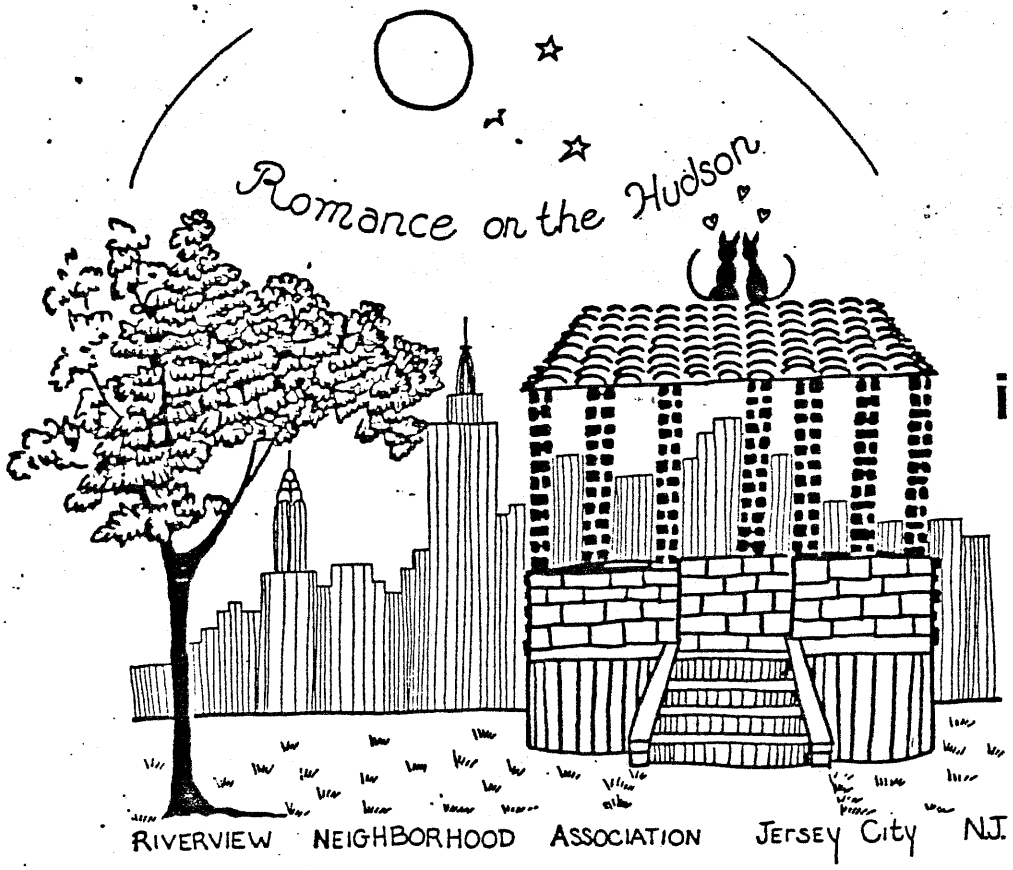
Dear RNA,

Again we would like to thank you for providing an enjoyable social function at Harbor View on November 6th. The Residents were most pleased with the party. Thank you again for taking the time to provide our Residents the needed contact with the community and taking time from your schedules.

Thank you,
Michael Melchionne
Asst. Dir.
Theraputic Recreation
Harbor View Health
Care Center

(RNA would like to thank the following neighbors who volunteered their time and energy to make this party a success: Madeline and Jack Rea, Ruth and Ted Conrad, Gert Bogdan, Rose Scalzo, Marie Tresca, Carin and Bobby Lewis. Our special gratitude to Mrs. M. Tuzzo who organized the party. Music was provided by Harbor View's Linda Macnamara and Curvi McMurray.)

Leon



For a Better Life in the Heights

1988

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CIRCLED DAYS ARE FOR RNA MEETINGS – DON'T MISS IT!!!

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Sgt. at Arms

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Historical Advisor

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COMMUNITY AWARENESS:
Carin Lewis

CRIME:
George Graul

ENVIRONMENT:
Anne Hart

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Michael Cioffi

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT:
Randy Sanford